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ABSTRACT

Drawing upon recent documents in the ERIC collection, this literature review examines emerging educational trends that will have an impact on community college planning during the 1980's. Introductory material discusses the demographic, governmental, technological, and administrative factors that influence college planning. The review then summarizes the salient features of descriptive and/or research reports dealing with advances made by community colleges in 11 specific planning areas: (1) reorganizing programs and services to meet the needs of older, nontraditional students; (2) identifying the factors that influence student retention; (3) determining the causes of grade inflation; (4) furthering cooperative efforts with community agencies and industries; (5) examining the impact of state-level program coordination and financing patterns; (6) promoting literacy development; (7) programming for reentry adults; (8) enhancing international education; (9) determining the role of the humanities in the community college curriculum; (10) utilizing computers for administrative and instructional purposes; and (11) coping with tax limitations. Summary conclusions are then provided, which urge colleges to expand their programs for older adults; exploit emerging technologies; enhance cooperative efforts with community agencies; and improve basic skills and literacy programs. A 28-item bibliography is included. (JP)

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JUNIOR COLLEGE RESOURCE REVIEW

PROMISES AND PERILS FOR THE 1980s

by

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ERIC CLEARINGHOUSE FOR JUNIOR COLLEGES
Arthur M. Cohen, *Principal Investigator and Director*

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JUNIOR COLLEGE RESOURCE REVIEW

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PROMISES AND PERILS FOR THE 1980s

It has become a cliche to say that times are changing. The alarmists project the curves of fuel supply, food production, and birth rates and conclude that sometime soon a cataclysm must occur. The optimists feel that technology and a rising concern by all for each will bring us into a satisfactory future. But members of both camps agree that increased knowledge, knowledge production and utilization alike, along with shared understandings are necessary.

Educators usually line up along with the optimists. They must believe there will be a world to be occupied by their charges. They look to future generations, trying to help people understand and manipulate their futures. They know that in the last two decades of the century, individuals lacking such basic skills as reading, writing, and mathematics will not be able to cope successfully with the society in which we will be living.

Societal changes have many implications for the future of community colleges. We cannot expect massive shifts rapidly, but we can watch for trends and plot their extension. Many examples of these trends may be noted: Increased proportions of women in colleges; more state control and state financing; more federal influence and regulation; a greater impingement of international problems; further rapid change in technologies; greater growth in adult and nonformal education; an increasing move into education on the part of business, industry, and labor; and higher proportions of older people in the population.

In addition to those environmental factors the community colleges must contend with shifts on the part of higher education institutions as they emphasize their own survival. Look for: lowering of admission requirements; increased emphasis on retention regardless of performance; further grade inflation; more rigid negotiated contracts; more cautious top leadership; an aging faculty; controversy replacing collegiality at all levels.

What, then, are the expectations for the community colleges during the 1980s? The broad areas of student needs, mid-life career changes, international education, and the responses to the other internal and external forces listed above have been well covered by community college analysts and commentators. The colleges can be highly responsive because they are undoubtedly the most flexible segment of post-secondary education and they are in excellent position to provide increased access for older adults. A review of documents in the ERIC system shows how the community colleges make their adjustments. This review highlights only a few of the most recent documents in each of the many categories with which community colleges are concerned.

Student Needs

College planners understand that unless they adapt to nontraditional populations their enrollments will shrink and in the extreme they may find themselves out of business. The changes necessary to accommodate the specific requirements of older students when designing publicity, application procedures, health services, and facilities were discussed by Zarakov (1978). Mangano and Corrado (1978) surveyed adult students in New York's two-year colleges and tabulated their preferences for evening and weekend classes, life-experience credit, and vocabulary and math skill improvement. The Commission on Women of the California Community and Junior College Association held hearings to determine the needs of present and potential women students in California community colleges. There was a clear call for special services including child care, financial aids, and support services of various types (Mitchell, 1979).

Retention

The subject of student retention has gained widening concern as the drop rates have increased. Returning and nonreturning students at Triton College were surveyed with the finding that nonreturning students had different educational objectives and were less satisfied that their individual goals had been met. "Conflicting job hours" among men and "other personal and family reasons" among women were listed high among reasons for not returning (Bakshis, 1979, p.17). Moraine Valley Community College organized a recruitment program to increase the pool of students who wish to attend college. The program's guidelines emphasize equality of access, availability of accurate information, and full involvement of all staff members. Recruiting activities are carefully designed and managed (DeCosmo, 1978). A third Illinois college system, the Chicago City Colleges, held a conference on enrollment and retention at which the Student Government Association of Kennedy-King Community College offered suggestions to relieve problems of retention. The Association proposed better testing and advisement so that each student's true scholastic starting point could be identified. Other issues addressed by the Association included a concern for the increasing number of underprepared students and the lower levels of expectation that they manifest, inadequacy of entrance tests, and the detrimental effects of emphasizing grades (*Enrollment and Retention . . .*, 1979).

Student retention was also studied in California with particular concern for students who transfer from the California community colleges to the University of California and the California state universities and college system. The conclusion was that intersegmental cooperation is required in order to retain students, particularly the minority, women, and handicapped student transfers. The report discusses outreach, admissions, financial aid, and student services as they relate to transferring students (*Increasing the Rate and Retention . . .*, 1979). The matter of student retention also was reviewed in the California Community College Statewide Longitudinal Study. Interviews with a sample of students in 15 colleges revealed that many achieve their goals within the courses they take but have no need for grades or credits, hence they "drop out" (Hunter and Sheldon, 1979).

Grade Inflation

Grade inflation is a by-product of the moves that were made in the 1970s to reduce the number of failures. The addition of "W" marks that could be assigned to students who withdrew from the class at various points during the semester tended also to reduce the number of "D" and "F" grades that were awarded. As an example, the grades awarded at Los Angeles City College between 1975 and 1977 were tabulated showing that there has been little

change in the percentage of "A" and "B" grades over more than two decades but that the marks awarded for withdrawing students tended to replace the failing marks (Gold, 1978).

Cooperation with Industry and Community

For the 1980s the community colleges and community agencies must work together in realizing the total mission of education. The foundations for this form of cooperation have already been put in place. A conference held at the University of Oregon had as its topic the interactions between community colleges and community schools (Collins, 1978). Cooperation with industry was described in the report of an Industrial Campus Project designed by Parkersburg Community College (1979) to provide workers with access to educational opportunities in their own businesses or industrial plants. And an example of an assessment of employers' training needs is provided in a study done by Broward Community College. Using careful sampling techniques the researchers identified numerous training needs primarily in the medical and industrial fields (Mehallis, 1978).

State Control

Numerous documents are concerned with state-level influences on community colleges. Recent moves are revealed in reports of state-level program coordination and financing patterns. Landry (1979) notes that program development in Massachusetts community colleges is heavily influenced by the state's procedures for monitoring program approval. The California Community College Board of Governors (1979b) developed a long-range finance plan that envisions a continuation of state fiscal support that accommodates inflation and changing enrollments.

Literacy Development

The community colleges are heavily involved with teaching basic communication skills to students who are recent immigrants to this country and to a sizeable number of native students who did not learn them in the lower schools. The Guided Studies Program at Clackamas Community College is typical of those literacy development programs that include testing, counseling, and especially tailored courses. The program also includes study of the humanities in order to introduce these students to the world of the arts (Epstein, 1978). The *Basic Skills Study Report* done for the Board of Governors of the California community colleges discusses community college responsibility in basic skills training and the results of a survey of those programs in California community colleges (1979a). Recommendations for personnel, goal determination, instructional approaches, evaluation, and funding are included. A project studying literacy development among community college students is described in a University of Texas report (Roueche and Hudgens, 1979).

Re-entry Adults

The tendency toward mid-life career changes has affected the community colleges as they design programs for people who are changing occupations, entering the work force for the first time, or re-entering after an extended absence. A project to determine the relative importance of educational programs for re-entry adults and to assist community colleges in providing programs in support services for these students is described in a State University of New York Report (Mangano and Corrado, [1979]). Implications for higher education of the changing work force needs and life styles are reviewed in the report of a conference held at the Wingspread Conference Center in 1978. The papers discuss sociological and demographic trends, the changing roles of women, and the changing forms of participation in the labor force (*Changing Work Force Needs . . .*, 1978). Women re-entering the work force are the targets of concern of a project designed to identify competencies required for success in various occupations and educational programs (Eliason, 1979).

International Education

The community colleges have become steadily more concerned with international education. Several studies and projects have helped maintain interest in this area of education. A survey of international and intercultural education in community colleges identified a wide variety of programs including those that were specifically international or intercultural and those that could be modified to have an international dimension if certain types of studies were infused in them (Shannon, 1978). A 1979 issue of *New Directions for Community Colleges* was dedicated exclusively to articles about international education in all its manifestations (Kirg and Breuder, 1979). Representatives from several countries discussed mutual interests at a conference on international developments in post-secondary, short-cycle education held in 1978 (Fersh, 1979). And the President's Commission on Foreign Language and International Studies recommended that the community colleges expand their course offerings and promote citizen education in international affairs, improve their foreign language programs, further academic and scholarly exchanges, and increase interest and enrollment in international studies (American Association of Community and Junior Colleges, [1979b]).

Humanities

For the past several years the humanities in community colleges have been the object of attention by the National Endowment for the Humanities, a federal agency that has sponsored numerous projects designed to bolster these studies. Curriculum and instruction in the humanities in community colleges are described in a report emanating from a series of studies conducted by the Center for the Study of Community Colleges under NEH sponsorship (Brawer, 1978). The Endowment also sponsored an American Association of Community and Junior Colleges (AACJC) Assembly on the humanities at which nearly one hundred participants discussed several background papers and formulated recommendations regarding the humanities in community colleges (Yarrington, 1980).

New Technologies

The rapid development of new technologies has had its effect on community colleges. Computers have been used for instruction and for administrative services and their problems and possibilities have long been felt. A Cuyahoga Community College report details specific actions taken at that institution in order to upgrade its own uses of the computer (Arth, 1979). The National Science Foundation sponsored a round-table on Appropriate Technology offered by the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges (1979a) at which appropriate technology was defined and a discussion of activities that community colleges can sponsor in that area was detailed.

Finances

The threat of financial constraints on community colleges has been raised in numerous reports. California, with the largest system of community colleges in the United States, was one of the first to feel the threat of restricted finances. A 1978 proposition limiting local property taxes caused tremendous upheavals in the mode of financing community colleges in that state. These shifts are described in one report on community college financing in the post-Proposition 13 era (Lombardi, 1979), another on the first-year effects of Proposition 13 (Meardy, 1979), and a third that discusses the specific effects of the property tax limitation on the Los Angeles Community College District (Koltai, 1979).

Conclusion

In summary, the pace of change accelerates and the community colleges must adjust to changing conditions. This is where I would like to pay respect to the League for Innovation in the Community College. The League is committed to keeping up, trying new

ideas, and charting new courses. I believe through such efforts as those being made by the League for Innovation and other organizations of a similar kind, we do have an opportunity to modify directions, to correct course charts, and to move into the future successfully.

The future brings numerous opportunities. First, as longevity increases and mental and physical ability holds up, many older adults search desperately for ways in which to play active and productive roles. The community colleges have a golden opportunity to expand their efforts in creatively furthering the educational needs of the older population in the public interest. It is far more desirable from a social standpoint to enhance the quality of life of older Americans rather than to effectively disenfranchise them as far as educational opportunities are concerned. They have paid their dues and they deserve their return.

Second, community colleges must exploit the new technologies. We are far out in front in the use of television as a delivery system. As energy shortages become even more severe and with the needs of adults for increased part-time education, television is a tool which must be used to the maximum. Also, courses and programs that have been developed for use on the broadcast medium and on cable can soon be made available on video disks and home cassette players. Within the next decade we will see tremendous development in both the cable and the home satellite receiver. Warner Cable-Vision is currently working on a 125-channel system. The ability to pick and choose at random from hundreds of sources will soon be commonplace. If education is to take advantage of these opportunities, we must organize and be ready.

Next in the list of opportunities for the future is the chance to work with and through other community agencies to attempt to clarify and resolve social needs for the enhancement of quality of life. Community forums are an excellent example of this kind of effort as are courses by newspaper. And we need to build on the foundations we have laid for cooperation with business, industry, and labor. Training needs will accelerate during the 1980s. In-service training and retraining are important elements in the arsenal of the community colleges, and we need to work more closely than ever with those groups.

Curriculum emphases must shift too. We must increase our efforts in the area of the basic skills and literacy training. It does little good to blame the deficiencies in this area on others. There is a tremendous job to be done, and we must get on with it. International education needs attention. In a shrinking world with finite resources, the countries of the world are becoming more and more interdependent. Our citizens need to know and understand the various cultures in the world, and the problems that face us in the future. And the community colleges must review, restate, and reaffirm the mission to the humanities, as the AACJC Assembly report, *Strengthening Humanities in Community Colleges* (Yarrington, 1980), asserts. Joseph Duffey stated, "The humanities are not the sacred province of a select few. They are, instead, the intellectual and spiritual resources by which a society as a whole perceives and gives shape to its cultural life and legacy" (in Yarrington, 1980, p. 115).

The future holds glorious opportunities. Most community college educators are optimistic that their institutions will thrive in the face of both the promises and the perils ahead.

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